

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) Congressman Tim Ryan (D-Niles) announced today that a key legislative proposal he has championed for the past three years will soon become law. Since March of 2003, Ryan has been urging his colleagues to support his legislation to ease the burden of student loan payments for America's service men and women. Ryan's proposal was included in the Budget Reconciliation Conference Report that passed Congress on Wednesday on a party-line vote. No Democrat voted in favor of the bill.

In the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, Congressman Ryan introduced the "Active Reservists and National Guard Student Loan Relief Act" and re-introduced an expanded version in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress under the title "Higher Education Loan Program for Our Troops Act" (HELP Our Troops Act). In July of last year, Ryan worked with fellow members of the Education and Workforce Committee Reps. Tom Osborn (R-NE) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) to negotiate for the inclusion of his legislation as an amendment to the higher education reauthorization bill. That bill has not yet passed Congress.

**"There's a lot wrong with the Budget Reconciliation bill, but my Republican colleagues did get at least one thing right when they added this provision to their bill," said Congressman Ryan. "I'm disappointed that our troops had to wait so long for this legislation. Nonetheless, I'm very pleased that Congress came to see the need for it. As a result, America's service men and women will be able to concentrate on the crucial task before them, rather than having to worry about their student loans.**

Specifically, the new legislation would provide deferments of student loan payments for all active duty military personnel who have been deployed as part of a military operation or national emergency involving terrorism.

**"We have asked our troops to make heroic sacrifices, and they will continue to meet those challenges with distinction and valor," said Congressman Ryan. "Though our service men and women are bearing an ever-increasing physical and mental price for this war, this legislation will ensure they bear one less financial price.**

Before the Higher Education Act's reauthorization in 1992 and throughout the Vietnam War military personnel deployed during war time were entitled to receive mandatory deferment on their federal student loans. However, that policy of mandatory deferments ended during the 1992 Higher Ed amendments, which dramatically consolidated the criteria for granting student loan deferments.